

(Washington, DC) Today, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) issued the following statement as part of the Congressional Black Caucus's (CBC) Foreign Policy and International Relations Taskforce event "Focus on Haiti: The Road to Recovery – A Six Month Review":

"As we commemorate the six month anniversary of the devastating earthquake in Haiti, there is no doubt that much progress has been made in that time. The outpouring of support, from U.S. and foreign governments, charities, NGOs, and everyday Americans, has been truly inspiring.

"At the precarious time in which Haiti finds itself, it wouldn't take much more than a thunderstorm to undo much of the good work that has been done. Now, as the focus shifts away from the immediate needs, we must focus on Haiti's long-term development.

"While supplying food is undoubtedly important, we must also invest in the agricultural sector and sustainable agricultural practices. While organizations have provided much needed medical care, their services must not further cripple Haiti's struggling medical system. And while a tarp is certainly better than being exposed to the elements, short-term, emergency shelter cannot not lead to years in tent cities.

"Finally, as we work to build Haiti's physical and economic infrastructure, we cannot forget that at the foundation of it all is an effective government. Our assistance must supplement and not supplant the Government of Haiti. We cannot create an eternally dependent state.

"Haiti must be able to stand on its own when the aid organizations leave.

"There are a lot of great ideas out there, and there are a lot of smart, hard-working people committed to helping Haiti. However, as decades of dependence on foreign aid have shown us, with the possibility to do good comes the very real possibility of waste, duplication, and inefficiencies in the rebuilding and recovery process.

"It is for this reason that I have introduced a bill calling for a White House Conference on Haiti.

It will bring together all of the major stakeholders in the rebuilding, along with other interested parties, to share their knowledge and best practices and identify gaps in the recovery process. It is my sincere hope that out of this Conference, opportunities for collaboration and coordination in projects big and small will emerge.

“As the media’s attention has now focused on other matters, it is more important than ever that people remember that while the cameras have turned away, the suffering in Haiti endures. We must remain steadfast in our commitment to helping the people of Haiti.”

July 12, 2010 marked the six month anniversary of the 7.0 magnitude earthquake that devastated Haiti on January 12, 2010. The earthquake caused hundreds of thousands of casualties as well as severely damaged the infrastructure of the nation. Today’s CBC “Focus on Haiti” event allowed for an update on the progress of ongoing recovery efforts from USAID, the United Nations, and Haitian and U.S. civil society organizations in order to better address current challenges and opportunities in the reconstruction process.

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings is Vice Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, a senior member of the House Rules Committee, and Co-Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

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